

Fourth of July brighter for USAWC 2010 grad's airport arrival after Iraq deployment

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Patriot Guard Riders to help welcome home USAWC 2010 grad from individual deployment to Iraq

July 1, 2011 – A lone soldier will return home from a year long Iraqi deployment to the greetings of family, friends, and the Patriot Guard Riders this holiday weekend.

Colonel David L. Ward, US Army, has spent the last year on an individual deployment to Baghdad Iraq and will arrive at Harrisburg International Airport at 5:25 pm, Sunday, July 3.

Ward's wife, Mary Ward, has enlisted the support of the Patriot Guard Riders to greet her husband at the airport and escort him home to Carlisle Barracks. The Patriot Guard Riders is a group of men and women from around the country that support our troops when they return home. The organization's main goals are to greet and congratulate our heroes, respect and mourn them and shield the family and friends from protestors.

The yearlong deployment has been hard on the Ward family. Like many other soldiers, Col. Ward's primary means of contact was email or a rare Skype call. Since learning of his return date, Ward has spread the word to gather a greeting force for her husband.

The response she received was unexpected. "I was overwhelmed to learn that people will be coming from Maryland and Delaware. They put out a call through their [The Patriot Guard Riders] organization. They don't know my husband, but they are responding to a call to welcome an honored soldier," Ward said.

Col. Ward's flight will land at 525 at Harrisburg International Airport, and all are welcome to support his return. He will be escorted by the Patriot Guard Riders back to his home on the Carlisle Barracks.

"We forget sometimes that people are grateful and happy to have the opportunity to thank a soldier for what he did in Iraq," said Ward, "That's what touched me – that people are willing to change their holiday weekend to welcome my soldier."